

## The Foundation of Constantinople 279

contest and display ; without, piled high around, were the countless imposing structures \* of that city which for more than half a thousand years was the most elegant, the most civilised, almost the only civilised and polished city in the world/ Beyond was the Golden Horn, crowded with shipping ; the Bosphorus in its winding beauty ; the Marmora, studded with islands and fringing the Asiatic coast, the long line of the Arganthonius Mountains and the peaks of the Bithynian Olympus, glittering with eternal snow—all combining in a panorama which even now no other city of mankind can rival.<sup>1</sup>

In the middle of the arena stood the spina, a marble wall, four feet high and six hundred feet long, with the Goal of the Blues at the northern end facing the throne, and that of the Greens facing the sphendone. The spina was decorated with the choicest statuary, including the three surviving monuments. Of these the Egyptian obelisk, belonging to the reign of Thotmes III., had already stood for more centuries in Egypt than have elapsed since Constantine transported it to his new capital. When it arrived, the engineers could not raise it into position and it remained prone until, in 381, one Proclus, a prefect of the city, succeeded in erecting it upon copper cubes. The shattered column belongs to a much later epoch than that of Constantine. \* It was set up by Constantine VIII. Porphyrogenitus, and once glittered in the sun, for it was covered with plates of burnished brass. The third, and by far the most interesting monument of the three, is the famous column of twisted serpents from Delphi. Its